CHAPTER XLIV

CONTROLLING THE FOOD SUPPLIES

I. FOOD PRODUCTION

THE established order reacts slowly and reluctantly to the appearance of an unexpected factor. No better illustration of this can be found than the manner in which the war direction of all belligerent countries overlooked the importance of organising during the War food supplies for their citizens. The feeding of armies was of course an important consideration in all wars. But food for non-combatants was their own concern. An army marched on its stomach, but there was no need to trouble about the marching equipment of those who stayed at home.

Vital issue neglected by belligerents

The food question ultimately decided the issue of this war. It was directly responsible for the downfall of Russia, finally it was the element that collapse of Austria and Germany. Indirectly it was responsible for bringing America into the War, since Germany's indiscriminate submarine warfare was her answer to our blockade. Yet at first, and for some time, Germany was so indifferent to the jeopardy of famine lying in wait for her just below the horizon, that in 1915 she was selling grain to Holland. France had a real excuse in her occupied provinces for the serious deficiency in her wheat supplies. The Russian Government was thinking only of how it could supply

1269